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FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: REVIEW OF MAINSTREAMING IN ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Agreed conclusions 1996/1 adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its 1996 coordination segment on coordination of the United Nations system activities for poverty eradication

Note by the Secretary-General

INTRODUCTION

1. The Economic and Social Council, at its 1996 coordination segment, adopted agreed conclusions 1996/1[1] on coordination of the United Nations system activities for poverty eradication. In a letter dated 4 September 1996, the President of the Council conveyed these agreed conclusions to the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women with a view to drawing the attention of the Commission to these conclusions so that the Commission, in its future work, might take into account the guidance given by the Council.

2. The President, in his letter, noted in particular a number of steps taken by the Economic and Social Council to harmonize the intergovernmental consideration of poverty eradication and to ensure that the different dimensions of poverty were covered in a complementary way by its functional commissions and by the Council itself, also taking into account other forums, in particular policy-making organs of the specialized agencies. He noted that the Council had concluded that its functional commissions should focus on the linkages between their field of competence and poverty eradication.

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3. A number of paragraphs of the Economic and Social Council's agreed conclusions address the role of the Commission on the Status of Women in the area of poverty eradication. The Secretary-General is requested to submit a report to the Council at its substantive session in 1997 on the implementation of the agreed conclusions. Any action taken by the Commission to implement the agreed conclusions would be included in that report.

4. In order to facilitate any action the Commission may wish to take to inform the Economic and Social Council of its activities to implement the Council's agreed conclusions 1996/1 on poverty eradication, the present note highlights those paragraphs and aspects of the agreed conclusions that are addressed directly to the Commission on the Status of Women, or that have a direct impact on the Commission's work. These are followed by comments that either describe activities already planned or undertaken by the Commission, or offer options for further action by the Commission. The Commission may wish to consider these comments and options with a view to informing the Council of its activities in the framework of these agreed conclusions.

5. The attention of the Commission is also drawn to part II of the agreed conclusions (paras. 27-33, and in particular paras. 31 and 32) entitled "Mainstreaming the gender perspective in United Nations activities for poverty eradication", and to part I which deals with coordinated United Nations support and availability of resources for poverty eradication activities at the field level.

EXCERPTS FROM AGREED CONCLUSIONS 1996/1 OF THE 1996 COORDINATION SEGMENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ON COORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ACTIVITIES FOR POVERTY ERADICATION

> Para. 37: "The Council will carry out an overall review of the theme of poverty eradication at a date to be determined, as a contribution to the review of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. In accordance with their programmes of work as approved by the Council, the relevant functional commissions should, in 1999-2000, prepare technical and focused inputs for the Council's overall review of poverty eradication."

6. The Commission on the Status of Women is scheduled to review, at its forty-second session in 1998, a synthesized report of national action plans to implement the Beijing Declaration[2] and Platform for Action.[3] It is expected that this report will follow the structure of the Platform for Action, and thus include a section on women and poverty. Also in 1998, the Commission will conduct a mid-term review of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001. That plan, as also noted in the Economic and Social Council's agreed conclusions 1996/1, "should serve as a general framework for the coordination of system-wide efforts for the advancement of women, including those aimed at eradicating poverty among women" (para. 31). In 1999, the Commission will initiate its review and appraisal of the Platform for Action, and conduct it at its forty-fourth session in the year 2000.

7. The review both of the synthesized report of national action plans and of the system-wide medium-term plan, as well as the review and appraisal process of

the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, should provide a focused input into the Economic and Social Council's overall review of the theme of poverty eradication at a date to be determined by the Council. In addition, the Commission's standing item on emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men, may also provide an opportunity to develop additional focused input into the Council's review, if required.

> Para. 42: "The Commission on Sustainable Development should focus its work related to poverty in accordance with paragraph 6 of its decision 4/2 on combating poverty. The Commission on Sustainable Development should rely on inputs from the ... Commission on the Status of Women, ... as necessary, in order to enhance the implementation of those recommendations of chapter 3 (Combating poverty) of Agenda 21 that correspond to core areas of the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women, and the International Conference on Population and Development, respectively."

8. Resolution 40/9,[4] adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session, should be transmitted to the Commission for Sustainable Development for its next session when it prepares the review of Agenda 21.[5] Furthermore, the Commission will address the critical area of concern "Women and the environment" at its forty-first session in 1997 with a view to preparing an input to the Commission for Sustainable Development and the special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

> Para. 43: "The Commission on the Status of Women has a special role to play in intergovernmental consideration of poverty eradication. While assisting the Council in reviewing and appraising progress in and promoting the inclusion of a gender perspective in policies and programmes of other functional commissions and system-wide, the Commission on the Status of Women, in its discussion on poverty, should continue to focus on women in poverty. The Commission on the Status of Women should play a catalytic role in reviewing and promoting the follow-up to the recommendations on gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of poverty eradication of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women, the World Summit for Social Development, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and other conferences. The Commission for Social Development should draw upon the work of the Commission on the Status of Women in the evaluation of measures adopted by the Summit that relate to various aspects of gender equality."

9. With regard to the Commission's role in assisting the Economic and Social Council in mainstreaming a gender perspective, attention is drawn to General Assembly resolution 50/203, in which the Assembly invited the Council to consider devoting one high-level segment, one coordination segment, and one operational segment to the advancement of women and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Accordingly, the Council will consider, in its 1997 coordination segment, as its cross-sectoral theme the

mainstreaming of the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.

10. In order to play a catalytic role in reviewing and promoting the follow-up to the recommendations on gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of poverty eradication of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women, the World Summit for Social Development, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and other conferences, the Commission on the Status of Women could be seized, as appropriate and on relatively short notice, of gender equality and women's empowerment issues in the context of poverty eradication in respect of these conferences under its standing item on emerging issues, trends and new approaches.

11. Furthermore, the review in 1998 of the synthesized report analysing national action plans of Governments will be an opportunity for the Commission to assess progress also in the critical area of concern on women and poverty. A similar impact can be expected from the comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action in the year 2000. Both should provide an input into the review and appraisal of the World Summit for Social Development to take place that same year.

12. Regarding the last part of the above-cited paragraph, to the effect "that the Commission for Social Development should draw upon the work of the Commission on the Status of Women in the evaluation of measures adopted by the Summit that relate to various aspects of gender equality", the following may be noted: the results of the consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women of the critical areas of concern are expected normally to take the form of concise, action-oriented agreed conclusions (see para. 9 of Commission on the Status of Women agreed conclusions 1996/1)[6]. These should, as a matter of course, be transmitted to the Commission for Social Development so that the Commission for Social Development can draw from them in the evaluation of measures adopted at the Summit that relate to various aspects of gender equality. Relevant background papers or reports prepared by the Secretariat, and especially the conclusions and recommendations of any expert group meetings that might have been organized by the Secretariat, could also be made available to the Commission for Social Development in the framework of its follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development.

13. As the Commission for Social Development usually meets before the Commission on the Status of Women in the same calendar year, the conclusions and recommendations from any expert group meetings organized by the Secretariat in that regard would already be available. Any agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, however, could be made available to the Commission for Social Development only in the following calendar year.

14. In terms of the long-term programme of work of the Commission for Social Development, the theme for 1997 is "Productive employment and sustainable livelihoods"; the theme for 1998 is "Promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons"; and the theme for 1999 is "Social services for all". By comparison, the Commission on the Status of Women will take up in 1997: women in power and

decision-making, women and the economy, women and the environment, and education and training of women; in 1998: violence against women, women and armed conflict, human rights of women, and the girl child; in 1999: women and health, and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women.

15. Accordingly, the results of the Commission on the Status of Women could be provided to the Commission for Social Development under the respective themes, taking into consideration the schedule of annual sessions.

> Para. 44: "The Commission on the Status of Women should determine, in consultation with other functional commissions, the best way to cooperate in reviewing the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in their respective areas in general, and under poverty in particular. Relevant functional commissions should consider having in their agendas a review of the gender implications of policies falling under their competence."

16. The first sentence in the above paragraph provides the opportunity for the Commission on the Status of Women and other functional commissions to increase linkages and cooperation in the future. The following are possible means for such better cooperation: regular statements by the Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women to other functional commissions, reporting on activities of the Commission on the Status of Women and focusing on policy approaches; statements by the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat to functional commissions, providing information on activities of the Commission on the Status of Women, and work done or planned by the Division in specific areas; transmittal of pertinent agreed conclusions and/or resolutions of the Commission on the Status of Women to the functional commissions, in accordance with the long-term programmes of work of the functional commissions; distribution of information to functional commissions of pertinent Division for the Advancement of Women background papers or results of expert group meetings; incorporation of a gender perspective in reports prepared for functional commissions by their respective secretariats, that is to say, enhanced cooperation of secretariats of other functional commissions with the Division for the Advancement of Women. Several of these options could be applied simultaneously. The multi-year work programmes would serve as a guide on the issues to be covered.

17. The review of the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development by the Commission for Social Development in the area of poverty could take advantage of the 1998 findings of the Commission on the Status of Women with regard to national action on poverty, and of system-wide action within the framework of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women.

18. Regarding the second sentence of paragraph 44, functional commissions may wish to request that a gender perspective be reflected in the documents prepared by their secretariats, thus enabling them to reflect the gender implications in agreed conclusions, resolutions or other decisions. To the extent that other functional commissions decide to include in their agendas a review of the gender implications of policies falling under their competence, they may wish to invite the Commission on the Status of Women to provide specific input for such reviews. If such requests cannot be accommodated within the regular long-term

work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women, its agenda item on emerging issues and trends could be used to develop such specific inputs.

> Para. 45: "... The Commission on Human Rights could consider providing an input to the Commission on the Status of Women on ensuring women's equal enjoyment of their human rights, in particular those relating to economic resources."

19. Such input could be provided most usefully in 1998 when the Commission on the Status of Women is scheduled to consider the critical areas of concern of violence against women, human rights of women, women in armed conflict, and the girl child; as well as in 2000, when the Commission on the Status of Women will conduct a review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

> Para. 49: "The mechanisms established by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) for the follow-up to conferences should support the work of functional commissions on poverty-related issues within their mandates and priorities, and the executive boards of funds and programmes should become more closely involved with their work. The work of the newly created Inter-Agency Committee on Women should complement and reinforce the work of the Commission on the Status of Women."

20. The first session of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality took place on 22 and 23 October 1996. In its short-term and long-term work programme, the Committee decided, inter alia, to focus on the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the United Nations system, as well as on the implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001. These efforts are expected to support the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council also in the area of poverty eradication.

> Para. 54: "... Also, the Commission for Social Development could draw upon the work of the ... Commission on the Status of Women on the theme of education" (in its examination of the theme of "Social services for all" in 1999).

21. The Commission for Social Development will take up the theme of "Social services for all" in 1999, with particular focus on education. The Commission on the Status of Women will consider the critical area of concern on education and training of women in 1997. The review of national action plans in 1998 will provide insights with regard to national-level activities. The mid-term review of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women will also cover the area of education and training of women. These could all provide useful input into the work of the Commission for Social Development in 1999.

> Para. 56: "The Commission for Social Development will examine productive employment and sustainable livelihoods in 1997. ... The Commission for Social Development should build on the work to be undertaken by the Commission on the Status of Women in 1997 on 'Women and the economy' ..."

22. The Commission for Social Development will meet from 25 February to 6 March in 1997, whereas the Commission on the Status of Women will meet from 10 to 21 March. Therefore, the conclusions and recommendations of the expert group meeting organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women can be made available to the Commission for Social Development, but not the results of the Commission on the Status of Women itself. These may, however, provide an input into the overall review and appraisal of the World Summit for Social Development in the year 2000.

> Para. 57: "The Commission for Social Development ... is to carry out an overall review of the theme of promoting social integration and participation of all people in 1998. The Commission for Social Development, in preparing for and addressing this theme, should take into account the relevant parts of the results of other major conferences and follow-up work being undertaken by the relevant commissions as well as by relevant inter-agency bodies. All functional commissions, including the ... Commission on the Status of Women, ... should provide inputs to this examination."

23. The results of the consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women of the critical areas of concern from 1997 can be made available to the Commission for Social Development. Given the schedule of sessions of the two commissions, any additional focused input by the Commission on the Status of Women need to be prepared at the 1997 session of the Commission. Alternatively, the Commission on the Status of Women may wish to entrust the Secretariat with the preparing of a factual overview of the Commission's past activities as well as of relevant recommendations contained in the Beijing Platform for Action as input into the work of the Commission for Social Development on this theme in 1998.

> Para. 58: "The Council encourages the Statistical Commission to pursue its work on the statistical implications of the World Summit for Social Development and other recent major international conferences ... The Statistical Commission should also provide an input to the Commission on the Status of Women for its review of the implementation of the recommendations on poverty measurement made by the Fourth World Conference on Women ..."

24. In view of the long-term programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women, such input could most usefully be provided for the Commission's session in 1998 within the framework of its review of national action plans or in 1999-2000, when the Commission will initiate and conduct the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

25. In conclusion, it may be noted that information about intergovernmental and United Nations system activities in support of implementation of the Platform for Action will be provided on an annual basis to the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly through the reports of the Secretary-General in the framework of Assembly resolution 50/203, Council resolution 1996/6 and Assembly resolution 51/69. The reports will be prepared on a rolling basis. Activities of functional commissions that are

relevant from a gender perspective will usually be reported to the Council so as to assist the Council in its coordination function in the integrated follow-up to all recent United Nations conferences and summits.

Notes

[1] See A/51/3 (Part I), chap. III, sect. A, para. 2.

[2] Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1), chap. I, resolution, annex I.

[3] Ibid., annex II.

[4] See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 6 (E/1996/26), chap. I, sect. C.2, para. 4, resolution 40/9.

[5] Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference, (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

[6] See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 6 (E/1996/26), chap. I, sect. C.1, para. 3.